

Setting up a Calendar System

Preparation:

- **Become knowledgeable** about the use of a calendar system through reading/training (includes gaining an understanding of the benefits, types of calendar systems, and implementation).
- **Provide the student with some initial exposure to use of objects representation in their daily routine** (i.e. Object paired with an activity, such as providing a student with a spoon on the way to the dining room to eat). This less structured strategy may facilitate the student's understanding when using the more structured calendar system.
- **Select the type of calendar system** (anticipation, daily, weekly, and monthly) to be used and create the calendar representation (i.e. basket, box, day runner). Decide if presentation will be in a left to right (most common) or top to bottom. Establish a finish container (placed at the end of the containers) or finish routine (i.e. close box or cover with cloth to indicate finish).
- **Select activities and corresponding symbols** (i.e. objects, partial objects, pictures, textures) that will be included in the calendar system. For example, a real spoon may indicate "eat". To avoid confusion, those objects selected are not to be used during the activity, as they are considered communication symbol. It is helpful to mount the symbols onto a symbol card (i.e. piece of cardboard), as this will facilitate the student's understanding of the purpose of the symbol card, and also allows you to place the written/brailled word (i.e. "eat") onto the card. In the event that you are unable to use an object symbol, then you may develop another type of symbol (such as partial object or texture) to represent an activity. For example you may place a piece of Velcro on a symbol card to represent trampoline, and the student would touch/find a corresponding piece of Velcro placed somewhere on the trampoline, in order to make this connection. Begin with a few items/activities (1-2) and gradually expand as the student progresses. The calendar system should never expand longer than what the student can grasp. In selecting items, chose:
 - Those that replica activities/topics the student is most interested in.
 - Those that will be most understood/occur frequently in the day.

As the student progresses you would want to try and gradually move them from a concrete communication system (i.e. objects) to a more abstract system (i.e. partial object, photo/traced, braille/print).

- **Select a Location**, placing the calendar system in a spot that is easily accessible to the student as they enter the room. The chosen activity should be close to the object as initially (while the student is learning), as you do not want too much space between the activity and object or too much of a time delay. Initially you may bring the containers to the student, and then gradually increase the distance so the student has to go to the actual calendar system to use it.
- **Determine how you can best facilitate communication** during the routine, so that the student's conversation does not just involve completion of the routine. For example, if they are picking up a spoon to eat, you might comment about what is being served. You might also follow the child's lead (i.e. if they pick up a symbol out of their routine or do something with the object; comment or say something back), and take advantage of unpredictable events (i.e. student drops a symbol and you exclaim "you dropped it, let's find it"). Initially, you may converse with the student using a lesser number of words/signs (shorter sentences/phrases) and as the child understands increases you can expand upon this.
- **Determine the IEP goals**, addressing the skills of anticipation/cognition/and most importantly language/communication. IEP goals ensure diligent implementation of the program and establishment of clear goals. If there are not any goals established, then the program may not continue in subsequent years.
- **Assign only one person** to start, who is trained to implement this system, and then later add others who are trained.
- **Preform a trial run** before starting with the student.
- **Plan to conduct daily and consistently**. If the student learns their routine do not stop the program. The calendar system is essential to expanding upon the student's level of understanding of concepts and language development.

Presentation to the student:

- **Present the calendar system** to the student.
- **Encourage the student participation in setting up the calendar routine**. Allow them to see/feel you put the object in the basket or have them help do this, to enhance their level of awareness of their

schedule. Allow the student to feel the containers as well as the items in it. You can use this activity to enhance the conversation, providing labels, information, and time concepts (first or now/later or second, etc.).

- **Go to first container-** Pick up communication symbol in the first container. Explore the symbol, talk about the activity, and when possible mimic the activity (i.e. simulate brushing teeth for tooth brushing symbol).
- **Have the student carry the object symbol to the destination** (table, sink, etc.). Have them lay the symbol down and begin engaging in the activity, assisting them through the process as needed. If a more abstract symbol was used (i.e. texture representing an object), then ensure the same texture is applied on the object being used, and that the student matches the texture symbol to the texture on the object. This will facilitate the student's understanding and correlation between the two.
- **Indicate finished** by placing symbol in the finished container or use of some other consistent strategy.
- **Go onto next container** and repeat the process until all activities are completed.

Note:

- Initially, the activities chosen should occur immediately after initiation of the calendar system. As the student progresses you will be able to increase the time and distance from when the object was presented and when the activity occurred.
- Ensure you have all of the objects in the calendar system available (even if the student is not using it). This can be placed in what is referred to as a future box (kept in the same general area). It is not part of the calendar system, but does allow the student to talk about activities that occur in the future.
- If student indicates a desire for an activity out of sequence, try to honor it, or return it to the future box and say/sign "later".

Resource: Calendars for Students with Multiple Impairments Including Deafblindness, by Robbie Blaha available at:

<http://www.tsbvi.edu/curriculum-a-publications/1024-calendars-for-students-with-multiple-impairments-including-deafblindness>